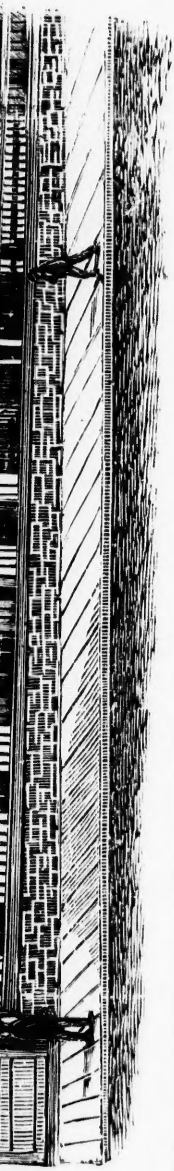

# The Halifax Institution for the Deaf and Dumb,

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA,

1857–1893.

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By JAMES FEARON,

*Principal of the Institution.*

## THE HALIFAX INSTITUTION FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB.

THE best possible history that can be given of this Institution is that which appears in the Twentieth Report, written by the late principal, J. Scott Hutton, M. A., who may be said to have laid the foundation-stone and added piece by piece to the structure, amid difficulties and discouragements such as are met with in a new and comparatively poor country, with that indefatigable energy and zeal for which he was so well known throughout the profession. He watched over its infancy with all the care and tenderness of a parent; he rejoiced in its increasing strength, and labored unceasingly until he brought it to that state of efficiency in which it is found to-day—fully capable of supplying the educational wants of the class in whose interest it was established.

The following extract from the Report above referred to gives in detail the progress and history of the Institution up to the year 1877:

Thirty-six years ago there was no provision within the Maritime Provinces of this country for the education of the hundreds of mutes who, with scarcely an exception, were utterly destitute of instruction, passing through life in a condition of the saddest mental and moral darkness, ignorant alike of their nature, their duty, and their destiny. In a few instances legislative aid had enabled parents to send their mute children to the States for the instruction unattainable at home, but how little was accomplished in this way may be seen from the fact that, during the long period of fifty years, the whole number of mutes received into the Hartford Asylum from the British Provinces was only twenty-five, and of these not more than six were supported by the Provincial legislatures. Of the twenty-five, 11 were from Nova Scotia, 5 from Canada East, 5 from Canada West, and 4 from New Brunswick. Some Provincial deaf-mutes may have been educated during that period at other institutions in the States besides Hartford, and a few certainly —two at least from Nova Scotia—in the schools of the mother country, but, in all probability, the entire number of British-American mutes who had enjoyed the blessing of education since the commencement of the century would not exceed thirty or forty.

It is worthy of note that of the whole number of mutes from the British Provinces mentioned as receiving instruction in the Hartford School, previous to the opening of institutions for their benefit nearer home and on their own soil, nearly one-half were from one of the smaller, less populous, and least known, though by no means the least important

colony—the Province of Nova Scotia. There is also reason to believe that the six stated to have been supported by the Provinces were all beneficiaries of the legislature of Nova Scotia.

These circumstances, while indicative of an earlier awakening to the claims of the deaf and dumb than in the more populous and wealthy sister Provinces, are also in harmony with the interesting fact that the earliest advocate of deaf-mute education on the American continent, Francis Green, author of the work entitled "Vox Oculis Subjecta," published in London in 1783, giving an account of Braidwood's school in Edinburgh, if not by birth a Nova Scotian, was yet identified with this Province both by education and official position for many years, being engaged in military duty in Halifax and other parts of the Province previous to the outbreak of the Revolutionary war, and subsequently holding the position of high sheriff of Halifax county. About the beginning of this century Mr. Green was residing in Medford, Mass., where he appears to have devoted his leisure hours to advocating in the journals the importance of educating the deaf and dumb, and endeavoring to enlist public sympathy in their behalf. Some of his articles may be found in the Boston papers, particularly the New England Palladium for the year 1793. The first attempt at an enumeration or census of the deaf-mutes of Massachusetts and the United States was also due to Mr. Green's instrumentality.

His son, Charles Green, the first educated deaf-mute of American birth, was a pupil of Braidwood, in his articulating school in Edinburgh, from 1780 to 1786, and, according to his father's account in the "Vox Oculis Subjecta," attained remarkable proficiency both in articulate speech and in scholarship. This young man was unfortunately drowned, shortly after completing his education, while shooting wild fowl on Cole Harbor, in the neighborhood of Halifax. Nova Scotia thus appears to claim an early and special connection with the cause of deaf-mute education in America.

The history and progress of the Halifax Institution, while presenting many tokens of divine goodness, afford an encouraging illustration of what may be accomplished by patient, steady, persevering, and yet quiet and unostentatious effort. Obscure and humble in its origin, this work was not ushered into existence amid the "pomp and circumstance of public demonstration, the smiles of wealth, the patronage of rank," or the plaudits of enthusiastic multitudes. Small, feeble, and insignificant in its beginnings, appealing to none of those sentiments of national honor or personal interest which exercise so large an influence in the inception and prosecution of many enterprises even of a benevolent character, the Halifax Institution for the Deaf and Dumb has gradually emerged into the light of public favor, and attained a position of usefulness and respectability such as its most sanguine friends could, perhaps, hardly have anticipated. Meeting, as it does, an important and acknowledged want in the community, it may now be fairly regarded as an accomplished fact—one of the permanent institutions of the country.

The Halifax Institution owes its origin, incidentally, to Mr. William Gray, a deaf-mute, and a pupil of the well-known Mr. Kinniburgh, of the Edinburgh Institution. Emigrating from Scotland, presumably with the

expectation of making a fortune in the New World, like others of his compatriots, Mr. Gray was landed, by stress of circumstances, at Halifax in the month of August, 1855, and after working for some time at his trade of tailoring, being thrown out of employment, he conceived or had suggested to him by a brother mute and fellow-countryman who happened to be also residing in Halifax the idea of opening a school for the deaf and dumb as a means of subsistence.

His advertisement attracted the attention of Rev. James C. Cochran, D. D., the venerable and devoted secretary of the Institution, who immediately sought him out, and found him in a mean lodging in a poor street, engaged in teaching one or two mutes, the place being destitute of the common comforts and even necessaries of life. Mr. Cochran's interest in the deaf and dumb had been first awakened, many years before, by meeting, on board an American steamboat, with the celebrated Laurent Clerc, and accordingly he now set himself to enlist the sympathies of other benevolent persons in Halifax on behalf of the neglected deaf-mutes of his native Province, an object in which he was providentially successful. Along with Andrew Mackinlay, Esq., custos of the county, and for many years afterwards the esteemed chairman of the board of directors, he succeeded in obtaining for the infant cause the notice and support of the legislature and the community, organized a board of management, and took other steps for the proper establishment and equipment of the school.

The first legislative aid was a grant of $1,200 in the spring of 1857, the grant, in subsequent years, being enlarged to $1,600 and $2,000, as the value and claims of the object became better understood. This, with the voluntary contributions readily obtained, enabled the promoters of the infant Institution to provide more suitable accommodation for the school, and to engage Mr. J. Scott Hutton, then and for ten years previously an instructor in the Edinburgh Institution, as principal, Mr. Gray being retained as assistant teacher.

Bringing from Scotland the needful books and apparatus for the work kindly donated by kindred institutions in the mother country—to the value of about $200—Mr. Hutton entered on his duties in Halifax on the 4th of August, 1857, with four pupils. The year following, the attendance having increased to twenty-seven, additional accommodation was procured, a matron engaged, and the general management then, for the first time, placed in the hands of the principal and matron, who henceforward resided in the same building with the pupils, the school previously being only a day-school, with three or four of the boys boarding in the house of the assistant teacher, and others with friends in the city.

At the close of the first regular session of the school, as an organized institution, in July, 1858, a public meeting on its behalf was held in the Mechanics' Institute, presided over by A. Mackinlay, Esq., president of the board, and attended by the Bishop of Nova Scotia and other prominent citizens, when, for the first time before a Halifax audience, an exhibition of the method and results of deaf-mute instruction was given in the examination of the pupils, which brought the condition and claims of the deaf and dumb more impressively before the community, and gave a valuable impulse to the new cause.

During the summer vacation immediately following, the principal,

accompanied by several of the pupils, undertook the first of a series of annual tours in the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, addressing public meetings and holding exhibitions on behalf of the Institution, in the principal towns and villages, with gratifying results in the awakening of interest in a department of benevolent effort new to the great body of the people, the accession of new pupils, and the replenishing of the funds.

The first spontaneous movement in the Province in aid of the Institution took place on the historic shores of Cobequid Bay, among the intelligent and thriving population of Noel, in the county of Hants, where a bazaar was held in July of this year, at which the principal and several of the pupils were present by invitation—an occasion memorable to the writer as the first on which he had the privilege of advocating the claims of the deaf and dumb before a rural audience in the Maritime Provinces. About two hundred and fifty dollars was realized by this—under all the circumstances a most creditable and cheering result.

In November of the same year (1858) the proceeds—amounting to $1,600—of a bazaar in Halifax, under the patronage of the Countess of Mulgrave, lady of His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor, enabled the directors to purchase the premises, previously rented; but, in the ensuing year, embracing a favorable opportunity, the property was disposed of by the board, and in August, 1859, the present premises, formerly known as Brunswick Villa, commanding a magnificent view of the noble harbor and surrounding country, were purchased for six thousand and four hundred dollars, a step which proved highly advantageous to the interests of the Institution.

On the 17th of February, 1859, a second exhibition of the school was held in the Mechanics' Institute to a crowded and deeply interested audience, and, by request, repeated on the 14th of March in the Temperance Hall, the largest public hall in the city, which was filled to its capacity by a congregation representing all classes and creeds in the community, drawn together by the rapidly growing interest felt in the work.

During the legislative session, the same spring, we had the honor of giving our first exhibition before the members of both branches of the legislature, on the floors of the House of Assembly, to which, in connection with similar exhibitions in subsequent sessions, may be justly attributed the promotion of that spirit of hearty liberality uniformly displayed by the legislature of Nova Scotia towards the Institution.

In the spring of 1860 the teaching staff was strengthened by the accession of the principal's father, Mr. Geo. Hutton, for nearly forty years engaged in the instruction of the deaf and dumb in Scotland. Mr. Hutton removed with his family to Nova Scotia in response to his son's pressing invitation and appeal for aid at a time when the funds were inadequate to meet the expense of an additional salaried teacher urgently required, and for ten years, till his death in 1870, gave his voluntary services to the Institution without stated remuneration.

In 1862 an act of incorporation was obtained from the legislature for the greater stability of the Institution.

Additions and improvements on the premises have been made from time to time to meet the growing necessities of the work. In 1864-'5 a

new school-room and dormitory were added to the building, with other improvements, at a cost of over $3,000. And, again, in 1874 extensive alterations and additions were made, including hospital accommodations and heating apparatus, at an expense of about $9,000. These changes have about doubled the original extent of the building, besides providing for the increased comfort and efficiency of the establishment.

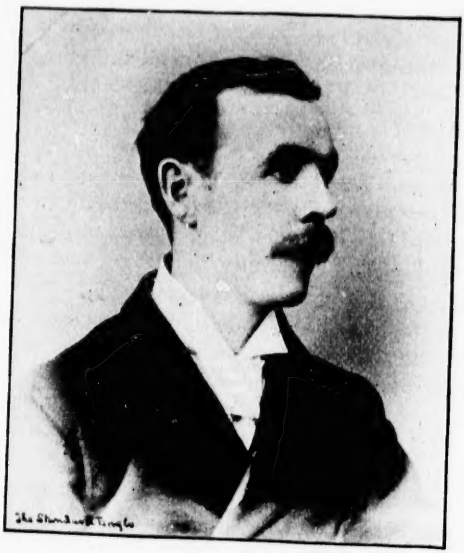
In 1878, Mr. Hutton resigned his position as principal of the Halifax Institution to accept that of vice-principal of the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Belfast, Ireland, where he labored for over four years with great success. He was succeeded at Halifax by Mr. A. F. Woodbridge, who afterwards established an institution in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The loss which the Halifax Institution sustained by Mr. Hutton's leaving was more than compensated by his work in Belfast. Language-teaching took the place of grinding in set subjects, firm discipline was established, and the manners and morals of the pupils underwent a complete change.

In 1882, after accomplishing what was really a missionary work, performed in a truly Christian spirit, at the earnest request of the directors in Halifax he returned to the scene of his former labors, where he continued to work with ever-increasing success until 1891, when his career was terminated by death—a career distinguished by enthusiasm, ability, self-sacrifice, and, above all, earnest devotion to the temporal and eternal welfare of those committed to his charge. The history of the Institution, with its rise and progress, constitutes a full biography of J. Scott Hutton.

At the invitation of the directors, Mr. James Fearon, the present principal, a teacher in the Royal Institution for the Deaf, Birmingham, accepted the position of successor to Mr. Hutton, entering on his duties in September, 1891. Mr. Fearon began the work of teaching the deaf under Mr. Hutton in Belfast, where he remained for over seven years, afterwards occupying similar positions in Margate and Birmingham, England.

In 1867 the Institution lost a warm friend in the death of Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, who had been connected with the work from its inception, and who did much to introduce it to the notice and support of the community. His name, with that of the Hon. Sec. Rev. J. C. Cochran, was appended to the first public appeal for funds, which, through his influence and reputation, was so generously responded to. He was a man of sterling worth, recognized ability, and extensive use-

fulness. In the same year, the Institution was deprived of an able treasurer in the demise of Mr. John Duffus, who had also been associated with the Institution from its commencement. Three years later, in 1870, the directors were called upon to perform the mournful duty of recording the death of Mr. George Hutton, father of Principal Hutton, who had come over from Scotland to assist his son in his arduous undertaking, giving his valuable services for many years gratuitously. He was a man of large benevolence, original genius



JAMES FEARON.

as well as force of character, yet, withal, modest and retiring in his disposition and unflagging in his zeal. Cheerful and trusting in the gloomiest circumstances, and with unbounded faith in Divine Providence, his life was one of self-sacrifice and of long devotion to the cause of the deaf and dumb.

In 1875 Mr. Charles Murdock, for many years director and chairman, was called to his reward. The deep interest which he took in the deaf was shared alike by his family, his brother having bestowed the munificent legacy of $20,000, whereby the Institution was established for the first time on a firm basis. The death of this director left the Rev. J. C. Cochran,

the venerable secretary of the Institution, the sole survivor of the original board, and he, five years later, after twenty-three years' connection with the establishment, was also gathered to his fathers. His ample reports show how deeply he was interested in the work to which he gave the first impetus and which he was largely instrumental in establishing. He was succeeded by the present secretary, Rev. Dr. Forrest, president of Dalhousie College, who, though burdened with the heavy responsibility of his own position, as well as the religious, benevolent, and social matters in which he takes so active a part, still bestows much time and attention upon the Institution, and is ever ready, when called upon, to give his valuable counsel and assistance in the management.

The Honorable D. McNeil Parker, M. L. C., has been associated with the Institution for over thirty-four years as honorary physician, and at present as chairman of the board. His connection dates back to within two years of the establishment of the school, and notwithstanding his professional and political duties, as well as benevolent work connected with various philanthropic institutions, he still finds time to devote to the interests of the school for the deaf, and in spite of advancing age makes a point of being present at almost every meeting of the board.

The following is the board of managers:

*Patron.*

His Honor M. B. Daly,
*Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, etc.*

*Directors.*

Hon. D. McNeil Parker, M. D. and M. L. C.
Hon. Provincial Secretary.
Rev. President Forrest, D. D.
William Tobin, Esq., M. D.
J. F. Kenny, Esq.
Andrew Mackinlay, Esq.
A. M. Bell, Esq.

*Secretary.*

Rev. President Forrest, D. D.

*Treasurer.*

Andrew Mackinlay, Esq.

*Physicians.*

DONALD A. CAMPBELL, M. D.
MURDOCH CHISOLM, M. D.

*Consulting Physician.*

ANDREW J. COWIE, M. D.

*Dentist.*

DR. A. C. COGSWELL.

*Oculist.*

STEPHEN DODGE, M. D.

## OFFICERS AND TEACHERS.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

*Principal.*

JAMES FEARON.

*Assistant Teachers.*

Miss JULIA R. BATEMAN.
Miss A. M. MOSHER.
A. R. DODDS.
S. H. LAWRENCE.
Miss C. FRAME.

*Matron.*

Miss M. GLADWIN.

*Matron's Assistant.*

Miss E. BRYMER.

INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT.

MICHAEL MCQUILLIN.

*Carpentry and Gardening.*

MICHAEL MCQUILLIN.

*Shoemaking.*

MARTIN ABBOTT.